

Wakeman B. Meeker House  
25 Westway Road  
Southport  
Fairfield County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-318

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CONN-318

## WAKEMAN B. MEEKER HOUSE

Location: 25 Westway Road (west side of street), Southport,  
Fairfield County, Connecticut.

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 18.643875.4554580.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood Pratt.

Present Use: Residence.

Statement of  
Significance: The original section of the Wakeman B. Meeker house  
was erected circa 1850-55. This rectilinear structure  
was a simplified version of the American Italian villa,  
a style which enjoyed widespread popularity in the  
1850s through the early 1870s. Characterized by smooth,  
uniform surfaces, wide projecting eaves and spacious  
verandas, the Italian villa as translated in the  
Meeker residence is plain though quite successful.  
A veranda trimmed with highly ornamental sawed  
scrollwork, added in 1891, enhanced the austere  
simplicity of the original house. Wakeman B. Meeker,  
Sr. and his son, Wakeman, Jr. - for whom the house  
was built - owned a wharf and warehouses on the  
Mill River Harbor, operating one of the prosperous  
shipping mercantile firms in Southport.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ca. 1850-55. Wakeman B. Meeker, Sr. is believed to have built the house for his son Wakeman, Jr. at this time. A map of Southport ca. 1855 and one of 1858 shows a structure standing on this plot of land.
2. Architect, builder: Though no concrete information concerning an architect or builder is available, the exterior form and details are similar to other commissions of Northrop and Jelliff, the most prominent builder in Southport after mid-century.
3. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

- 1832 Deed, May 2, 1832, recorded in Volume 49, page 237.  
Anna Osborn to Wakeman B. Meeker.
  - 1879 Deed, January 13, 1879, recorded in Volume 60, page 168. Wakeman B. Meeker to Wakeman B. Meeker, Jr.
  - 1915 Deed, Will, March 1, 1915, Wakeman B. Meeker to Eliza H. Meeker, wife.
  - 1915 Deed, June 30, 1915, recorded in Volume 87, page 327.  
Estate of Eliza H. Meeker to George W. Phillips.
  - 1915 Deed, July 16, 1915, recorded in Volume 84, page 597.  
George W. Phillips to Matilda M. Sherwood.
  - 1915 Deed, November 18, 1915, recorded in Volume 87, page 476.  
Estate of Matilda M. Sherwood to Mary S. Lambertson.
  - 1962 Deed, September 7, 1962, recorded in Volume 442, page 602. Estate of Mary Lambertson to Elizabeth Lambertson Pratt.
  - 1962 Deed, June 18, 1962, recorded in Book 438, page 296.  
Elizabeth L. Pratt to Jane K. Sherwood L. Pratt.
4. Alterations and additions: The Southport "Chronicle" reported on May 28, 1891 that "Mrs. W.B. Meeker is having a veranda built about the house occupied by Isaac Bennett." This veranda is apparantly the sawed Gothic style porch which surrounds the front facade and portions of each side.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Wakeman B. Meeker, Sr. was a prosperous shipping merchant in Southport during the nineteenth century. In 1832 he acquired the old Bulkley residence, 824 Harbor Road, the plot of land upon which the Meeker house now stands and which is directly north of the Bulkley house, and property fronting the harbor. The Meeker family lived in the colonial frame Bulkley house, and together with Simon Sherwood, Wakeman Meeker built a wharf and three warehouses across from his residence. The mercantile shipping firm of Meeker & Sherwood was organized in the 1830s. They owned three schooners and seven sloops, used for freight and passenger service. The firm dissolved at mid-century and was reorganized as W.B. Meeker & Son's.

Wakeman B. Meeker, Sr. died in December 1862 at the age of seventy-four. His son carried on the business until his own death in March 1915 at the age of eighty-six.

C. Bibliography:

- 1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Fairfield County Deed Records, Office of the Recorder,  
Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield, Connecticut.

Fairfield County Probate Records, Probate Court,  
Fairfield Town Hall, Fairfield.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Banks, Elizabeth, compiler. This is Fairfield, 1639-1940.  
New Haven: Walker-Rackliff, Co., 1960.

Perry, John H. The Southport Harbor. Fairfield: Fairfield  
Historical Society, 1921.

Southport "Chronicle," 1869; May 28, 1891; November 5, 1891.

Prepared by Jan E. Cigliano  
Staff Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
December 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The original section of the Meeker house was erected ca. 1850-55. This rectilinear structure was a simplified version of the American Italian villa, popular in this county from the 1850s through the early 70s. The structure is characterized by smooth, uniform surfaces, wide projecting eaves and a spacious veranda, added in 1891. The veranda, trimmed with highly ornamental sawed scrollwork enhances the austere simplicity of the original house. The residence has been excellently maintained throughout its one hundred years.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The three-bayed structure is two stories with attic and partially exposed basement. The main block is laid out in an irregular plan; it is rectangular with the porch, and measures 40'-6" (front elevation) x 48'-4".
2. Wall construction, finish, color: Wooden framing covered with clapboards and painted gray.
3. Structural system, framing: Wooden timber frame construction.
4. Porch, portico, veranda: A wide bracketed veranda with

carpenter scrollwork wraps the front facade and a portion of each side at the main level. The veranda was added in 1891 and it is an excellent example of sawed Carpenter Gothic detail.

5. Chimneys: Two rebuilt chimneys sit on the roof ridge.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Side lights and a three-band transom frame the front entry; original etched glass is fixed in the openings. The front door is of recent date. The door on the veranda's eastern side, permitting access from the porch to an interior back room, is paneled with a single pane of glass, installed ca.1900.
  - b. Windows: Floor-length nine-over-nine light double-hung sash windows are on the front facade at the main level. Original six-over-six light double-hung sash windows are at the second floor front. The two east facade windows are full length, as are the two windows in the back room.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof covered with wooden shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Roof overhang creates a wide, projecting eave. Rectangular decorative brackets are under the eaves.
- C. Description of Interior:
  1. Floor plan: The main level is laid out in an irregular side hall plan. Entering into the stair hall through the front door, a straight stairway is built against the northwest wall. To the right is an L-shaped double parlor with a fireplace on the northeast wall of each room. Access to a back room is through the doorway at the end of the entry hall as well as the veranda's exterior east door.
  2. Stairways: Main stairway in the entry hall has thin rectangular cross-section balusters and a turned newel post. Molded trapezoid-shaped panels trim the face string.
  3. Flooring: Floors are covered with random length wooden boards, linoleum and carpet, all of recent date.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster ceilings and plaster walls covered with wallpaper.
  5. Doorway and doors: Wooden six-paneled doors.

6. Decorative features and trim: Marble mantles with simple trim frame the fireplaces in the first-floor parlors. The front parlor has a marble hearth and a cast-iron cover over the opening. The rear parlor also has a marble hearth, though with a sheet-metal cover over the opening.
7. Mechanical equipment:
  - a. Heating: Central heating.
  - b. Lighting: Modern electrical system.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces southwest onto Westway Road.
2. Historic landscape design: A nineteenth century wooden picket fence defines the front property line.
3. Outbuildings: A barn is to the northwest of the house.

Prepared by John G. Waite  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
August 1966

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Southport Historic District Commission, several members of whom provided the necessary funds. The project was completed in the summer of 1966 under the general direction of James C. Massey, then the Chief of HABS; Ralph Schwarz of the Ford Foundation; and Architect John G. Waite (Columbia University); with assistant architects Christopher Benninger (Harvard University), Richard Haines (University of Kentucky) and Andrew Craig Morrison (University of Michigan), and architectural historian David T. Van Zanten (Harvard University), at the HABS Field Office in Southport, Connecticut. The data was prepared and edited in HABS Washington office in December 1978 by Jan E. Cigliano, staff historian. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in September 1966.